

VZCZCXRO5242  
PP RUEHCN RUEHGH  
DE RUEHIN #0320/01 0790942  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 200942Z MAR 09  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1178  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9030  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 0161  
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 0273  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0079  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0608  
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 3027  
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 0173  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0482  
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 2483  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 6974  
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 000320

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/19/2019

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SUBJECT: AIT CHAIRMAN BURGHARDT AND FM OU DISCUSS BILATERAL RELATIONS, TRANSITS, WHO, AND MRLS

REF: TAIPEI 301

Classified By: AIT Deputy Director Robert Wang,  
Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Extradition, an FTA and visa waiver are Taiwan's top bilateral priorities, FM Ou told AIT Chairman Burghardt during their March 18 meeting. Although the leadership in Beijing has tacitly accepted Taiwan's diplomatic truce and mutual non-denial, this is not the case at lower levels, Ou said, underlining specifically the need for technical, working-level talks on WHA observership. Although it appears Beijing is discouraging Taiwan's diplomatic partners' inquiries about switching diplomatic recognition, MOFA is recommending Taiwan President Ma attend both the June 1 presidential inauguration in San Salvador and the July 1 inauguration in Panama City. On trade, Chairman Burghardt and the Deputy Director made clear that Taiwan needs to address U.S. concerns on beef, apples and Minimum Residue Levels (MRLs). End Summary.

Strong U.S.-Taiwan Relations Important to Cross-Strait Efforts

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¶2. (C) The U.S.-Taiwan relationship needs to be strong, so that Taiwan can negotiate with the PRC from a position of confidence, FM Ou told the Chairman during their March 18 meeting. Ou added that, of Taiwan's three current goals for the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, an extradition agreement would take priority, followed by visa waiver, and a free trade agreement. Extradition is more urgent, Ou said, because recent cases have drawn attention to the need for a means of returning criminal suspects wanted in Taiwan and spurred public calls for an improved mechanism for law enforcement cooperation. (Note: Ou is probably referring to press surrounding the recent return of an Amcit accused of molesting children in California. One editorial called for the exchange of this Amcit for Wang You-theng, currently in the United States and wanted in Taiwan for white-collar financial crimes. End note.) While noting some present difficulties regarding an FTA and visa waiver, Burghardt noted these three issues were important and that movement on all three would be judged on their individual merits.

¶3. (C) Burghardt commented that technical issues with passport security - particularly the lack of a requirement

for personal appearance when applying for a Taiwan travel document - would need to be addressed before visa waiver could be discussed. The Foreign Minister advised Burghardt that new measures would require an identity card for children eight to fourteen years of age. North American Affairs Director General Harry Tseng added that these new measures would go into effect within the next six months and that information from the identity card, including photos, will be linked to the MOFA passport database. The Chairman noted that, in addition to passport security, legislation permitting the waiver of the three percent visa refusal rate requirement for the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) would expire June 30. Taiwan's current visa refusal rate did not meet this three percent refusal rate requirement. There is good will to make this happen, Burghardt commented, but the U.S. is wrestling with various issues and hopes that Taiwan will help address some of these obstacles as well.

¶4. (C) Burghardt ruled out discussions of an FTA in the short term, noting that the Executive Branch does not even have fast track negotiating authority. Instead, he urged working toward progress on the building blocks of an agreement under the TIFA. First, though, we need to make progress on issues such as beef, MRLs, and apples. The DDIR emphasized that many bilateral economic issues, such as pharmaceuticals, could be discussed under a TIFA but beef, apples, and MRLs would need to be resolved first.

#### Presidential Transits

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¶5. (C) MOFA has recommended that President Ma attend both the June 1 presidential inauguration in San Salvador and the July 1 presidential inauguration in Panama City, Ou said. Taiwan has only a small number of diplomatic allies and both El Salvador and Panama are key among them, explained Ou. (Note: In a separate meeting with the Chairman, President Ma and his National Security Advisor confirmed that the President is considering the trips, but said Beijing has so far rebuffed Panama's attempts to discuss recognizing the PRC and appears to be doing the same with El Salvador's new president-elect. See reftel. End note.) Burghardt reassured Ou that the U.S. is ready to discuss transit arrangements once a decision has been made.

#### Diplomatic Truce Still Holds

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¶6. (C) Despite some concerns new Salvadoran president-elect Mauricio Funes could attempt to switch diplomatic recognition to Beijing, Ou believed Funes would be cautious in taking any decisions affecting the bilateral relationship, especially given existing economic cooperation. Interactions between Taiwan and PRC counterparts abroad were inconsistent. In some places, PRC diplomats were very friendly to their Taiwan counterparts - going as far as to invite them to lunch. In other places, PRC officials continued to protest Taiwan's diplomatic efforts and participation in various organizations. It is clear, said Ou, that Beijing's Foreign Ministry has not issued clear instructions relating to a "diplomatic truce" to its missions abroad, leaving each mission to interpret for itself Beijing's public statements on the issue.

¶7. (C) Regardless, looking at Beijing's actions - i.e. its refusal to accept Paraguay, the Dominican Republic, and Panama's requests to switch diplomatic ties, it is clear that the PRC does not want anything to negatively affect warming cross-Straits relations. In fact, Ou continued, he himself had issued no instructions on the subject. "(W)e are still observing," Ou explained, "(but) personally, I hope our diplomats would interpret the ceasefire in a broader way."

#### WHO Observership - Need Technical Level Talks

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¶8. (C) Participation in international organizations, however, will be more complicated than the issue of diplomatic allies

and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, Ou added. Although Taiwan has seen signs of the PRC's good will, the two sides still need to establish a technical channel to discuss the details, he said. This matter is being handled directly by the NSC.

#### Regional Relations Improving

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¶9. (C) Burghardt expressed his appreciation for Ma's pledge of no surprises in the U.S.-Taiwan bilateral relationship as well as his emphasis on substance over show. He recounted three examples Ma had given him to demonstrate this commitment: Taiwan would not ask for a certain kind of transit just to show that the U.S. would grant it; Taiwan would not ask for certain weapons systems just to show the U.S. would sell them; and Taiwan would not insist on certain names just for domestic political considerations. Ou assured Burghardt that the Ma administration is different from the Chen administration. The Ma government is working hard to rebuild trust with many countries. Even now, Taiwan's relations with Japan, the EU, and Singapore are improving, he said, noting that there is still more to be done with Korea.

#### Publication of New MRL List Serves as Notification

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¶10. (C) Before Ou arrived, DG Tseng told Burghardt and the Deputy Director that the Ministry of Health (MOH) had published a new list showing which MRLs had been increased. It was MOH's view that publication of this new list met the notification requirement under the U.S.-Taiwan Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on MRLs. DDIR replied that the MOU requires coordination and consultation prior to public dissemination of any new list, something that clearly had not been done. Tseng said he would convey this view to MOH.

#### Participants

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¶11. (U) Participants in the meeting were Foreign Minister Ou, North American Affairs Division (NAAD) Director-General Harry Tseng, NAAD First Section Chief Douglas Hsu, NAAD Officer Stacey Lin, AIT Chairman Burghardt, AIT Deputy Director Wang, EAP/TC Director Ted Mann, and AIT Poloff Deanna Kim.

¶12. (U) Chairman Burghardt did not have an opportunity to clear this message.  
YOUNG